

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Fromme-Birney "Round" Barn

and/or common Same

## 2. Location

street & number NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S16-T29-R20

not for publication

city, town Mullinville

☒ vicinity of

state Kansas

code 20

county

Kiowa

code 097

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Phyllis Birney

street & number 750 S. Ocean Blvd., Apt. 1, South

city, town Boca Raton

vicinity of

state Florida 33432

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kiowa County Clerk

street & number Kiowa County Courthouse

city, town Greensburg

state Kansas 67054

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date N/A

☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A

state N/A

## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☒ unaltered  
☐ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fromme-Birney "Round" Barn (c. 1908-1912) is located on the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S16-T29-R20 in Kiowa County, Kansas, southwest of Mullinville (pop.339). The one-story, sixteen-sided, frame barn is covered by a double pitch, domical roof. The barn is constructed on the basis of sixteen parts for each major unit, all parts being equal.

Sixteen major units comprise the roof, wooden shingles cover the roof, each unit is bounded by galvanized metal strips. A sixteen-sided cupola vent surmounts the roof. The cupola's roof is a miniature reproduction of the double pitch domical roof it surmounts. A metal weathervane alights the cupola's apex.

The barn stands exactly on an east-west axis, with its facade entry facing east. The barn measures seventy feet across from all opposite corners. Each exterior bay measures fourteen feet across. The barn stands almost fifty feet tall, each wall panel stands ten feet tall and is sided with clear white pine. The wall panels are finished with corner posts, excepting two groupings where the posts have disappeared.

The double door opening which marks the facade is flanked by two wall panels with central windows. Wall panels with a door surmounted by a small window are alternately placed between the single window panels. Many of the shutters and doors are gone.

A sixteen-sided granary stands in the center of the barn on the first floor. The granary measures sixteen feet across from all opposite corners. A wagon area measuring thirteen feet wide "encircles" the granary. Fourteen trapezoidal stalls measuring fourteen feet in length and fourteen feet at their widest part line the exterior wall spaces on the first floor. Tongue and groove clear white pine boards side the stalls and the granary.

A semi-free span roof rises almost forty feet above the hay loft, all of the roof trusswork is exposed. Several holes in the roof are apparent but this is the only deterioration evident in the structure.

The Fromme-Birney "Round" Barn stands as the only extant structure associated with the Fromme farmstead. It no longer houses draft horses. It is used for feed storage and shelters several large owls.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** c. 1908–1912 **Builder/Architect** William "Pat" Campbell (Cambell?)

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Fromme–Birney "Round" Barn (c. 1908–1912) is being nominated to the National Register at the local level of significance under criterion C for its architectural significance as a building which embodies distinctive characteristics of a type and period. The Fromme–Birney "Round" Barn is a sixteen-sided barn that is seventy feet wide and fifty feet high. It was constructed sometime between 1908 and 1912, during the height of round and polygonal barn construction in the midwest, by William "Pat" Campbell, an Irish immigrant who settled in the Kiowa/Ford County area in the 1880s or 1890s. Although a specific design source can not be identified for the barn, it is believed that Campbell was influenced by agricultural and architectural journals which published articles and specifications on these barn types from the 1890s through the 1920s.

State agricultural experimental stations, and to a lesser extent, The United States Department of Agriculture, private firms and individuals promoted round and polygonal barn designs as the wave of the future in publications and model projects during the late Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century, with the building activity for these barns peaking in the 1900s and 1910s. Many such examples of round and polygonal barns were built in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, where agricultural experimental station promotion programs were strong. These barns were promoted as time and labor saving, the centrally located silo or granary provide more efficient working conditions and the light, balloon framing and free-standing or semi-freestanding roofs provide additional interior space. Additionally, the round and polygonal barn forms are wind resistant, a very real issue on the prairies where high gusts often carry away gable roofed structures. William Radford wrote in 1909 of the round barn that, "A cyclone might lift such a roof and roll it, but it would hardly break into pieces." While the round and polygonal barns may have provided a more efficient layout they often lacked adequate ventilation and lighting and were considered expensive to build. By the mid-1920s the construction of the round and polygonal barns was no longer actively promoted.

It does not appear that the round and polygonal barn types were ever prolific in Kansas, as only twenty-three such barns have been identified. Of these, twenty are extant, including the Thompson–Wohlschlegel Round Barn in Harper County (NR 1985). Although three such round barns once stood in Harper County, no significant clustering of round or polygonal barns appears to have occurred in Kansas. Kansas may have lacked the active promotion by agricultural experimental stations that other states such as Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin experienced; as to date, no detailed references to these barns have been found in the Kansas agricultural publications of the period. An early reference to octagonal barns was found in the March, 1891 Quarterly Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, which criticized this type for its expense and waste of space.

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The Fromme-Birney "Round" Barn fits well into the early Twentieth Century framework described above, embodying the distinctive characteristics of the round and polygonal barns of the period. Its seventy foot span makes it somewhat wider than the average round barn and its sixteen equal sides make the barn somewhat of an anomaly among the more common round barns of the period. However, its proportions, use of materials, and design clearly link the sixteen sided version to its more prolific true round barn cousins. Its balloon framing, semi-supported double pitch, domical roof, cupola and center granary place the Fromme-Birney "Round" Barn directly within this phase of agricultural building and design. The sixteen equal panels that comprise the barn's vertical wall are sheathed with clear, white pine, horizontal planks and finished with corner posts. The sixteen-sided construction avoided warp fitting the wood as was done in the construction of round barns but did not subtract significantly from the amount of usable space in the barn. Additionally, the sixteen-sided construction allowed Campbell to use only a framing square to check dimensions during the building of the barn. Campbell may have avoided the true round construction to be practical, heeding the advice of the critics who contended that this type of construction was difficult for the average builder and that poor construction of this barn type would all but eliminate its virtues. Yet, Campbell was a skilled carpenter who built an extremely sturdy sixteen-sided barn which served its agricultural purpose very well for many years.

As previously stated, a specific design source for the Fromme-Birney "Round" Barn can not be identified but it is likely that Campbell had access to the various agricultural and architectural publications which contained information on round and polygonal barns. Campbell's source material may have provided an idea for the barn if not an exact prototype. Proportionally, the Fromme-Birney "Round" Barn appears similar to many of the barns designed and constructed by Benton Steele, a prolific, early Twentieth Century mid-west round barn builder who made his home in Halstead, Kansas after 1910. Although Steele's designs rely on hollow clay tile foundations and vertical wood siding, the double pitch roofs, the cupola vents, and the overall proportions of Steele's barns provide enough similarities to make it conceivable that Campbell was aware of Steele's designs or perhaps even consulted Steele on the design and construction of the Fromme-Birney "Round" Barn.

The sixteen-sided barn was commissioned by Henry W. Fromme (1858-1930s?), an affluent wheat farmer who had immigrated to the United States from Germany in the 1870s and settled in Kiowa County in the late 1880s or 1890s. Fromme needed a larger barn to house his draft horses and as oral tradition recounts, consulted with Campbell until an acceptable design was achieved. The estimated cost of \$8,000.00 places the Fromme-Birney "Round" Barn's construction higher than many other round and polygonal barns constructed during the early Twentieth Century by several thousand dollars. The clear, white pine boards and Campbell's meticulous skill likely increased the barn's final cost but



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resulted in a product with longevity. Today, only the original wooden roof shingles are deteriorating, the structure is sound. All other structures associated with the Fromme farmstead have long since vanished. The Fromme property was purchased by the Birney family in 1954 and in 1985 the barn was deeded to Phyllis Birney. The Fromme-Birney "Round" Barn no longer houses draft horses, today it is used for feed storage and shelters several large owls.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Bucklin SE

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	4
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4	5	5	0	8	0
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4	1	5	3	2	2	0
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Zone

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Zone

Easting

Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Martha Gray Hagedorn, Architectural Historian

organization Kansas State Historical Society

date May 19, 1987

street & number 120 West 10th

telephone 913-296-5264

city or town Topeka

state Kansas 66612

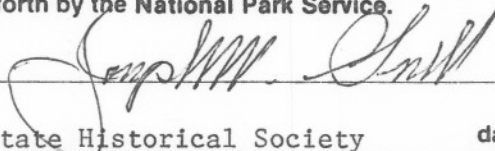
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Executive Director, Kansas State Historical Society

date May 30, 1987

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The nominated property is a sixteen sided barn that measures 70' across from all opposite corners. It stands on a square tract measuring 140' x 140' which is on the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S16-T29-R20 in Kiowa County, Kansas. The northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest corners of the 140' x 140' tract are 64' directly northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest respectively of the respective northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest corners of the barn's base. The north, east, south, and west corners of the barn are 35' directly south, west, north, and east of the respective points on the 140' x 140' tract which bounds the barn. The north by northeast, east by northeast, east by southeast, south by southeast, south by southwest, west by southwest, west by northwest, and north by northwest corners of the barn are directly 41' south by southwest, west by southwest, west by northwest, north by northwest, north by northeast, east by northeast, east by southeast, and south by southeast of the respective points on the 140' x 140' tract which bounds the barn. Beginning at the northeast corner of the parcel the boundary proceeds 140' south, 140' west, 140' north, and 140' east to the point of beginning.



